

2009

## The Concord, 25 March 2009

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# CONCORD

*A Journalistic Ministry of Students at Luther Seminary*

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**It's the end of the world (as we know it): Seminary Transitions**

*Multiple authors, pages 6-7*

**"As (Martin Luther) once said..." Dealing with Pulpit Envy**

*By David Lose, page 10*

**The skies are blue with yellow stripes (it's all that smoke coming out of our pipes)**

*By Mark Nygard, page 11*

*Plus: Joyrides in a Beemer, bribed in Laos, Bono prophecies, apparently Pittsburgh isn't all that bad, and more...*



# Letter from the Editor

By Natalie Gessert  
Concord Managing Editor

At a party given by a billionaire on Shelter Island, acclaimed author Kurt Vonnegut informed his friend, satirist Joseph Heller, that their host, a hedge fund manager, had made more money in a single day than Heller had earned from his wildly popular novel *Catch-22* over its entire history of sales. Heller responded with his usual bite, “Yes, but I have something he will never have. I have enough.”

Really? Enough? While the first six commandments dealt with matters of ourselves and what we do with our bodies, the Seventh Commandment concerns our things. In this commandment God communicates that things pieced together from creation are good. The material stuff we surround ourselves with is useful to life; they are necessary to provide food, clothes, home and everything we need from day to day. Creation should expect the things of this world to sustain and prosper life.

Interestingly, our contemporary taboos no longer question what others do in the bedroom. Instead, taboos are now a matter of material things. This taboo came to be when popular culture understood things not as “life support” but namely as signs of success or indications that we or others have achieved an observable measure of happiness and influence. Of course this produces the troubles of today including corruption at AIG, the credit crunch, bank collapses and the many current examples of taking money and property – often by fraud and false dealings.

John Steinbeck’s novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, published as the sun set on the Great Depression in 1939, describes the nature of things. Specifically, Steinbeck writes about a common sharecropping family attempting to grow things to eat and sell so life might be sustained, but at odds with the things the bank requires. Steinbeck begins chapter 5 as the bankers grimly come to foreclose the sharecroppers farm. He writes, “The Bank—or the Company—needs—wants—insists—must have—as though the Bank or the Company were a monster, with thought and feeling, which had ensnared them. These last would take no responsibility for the banks or the companies because they were men and slaves, while the banks were machines and masters all at the same time... But, you see, a bank or a company can’t [let you stay], because those creatures don’t breathe air, don’t cat’ side-meat. They breathe profits; they eat the interest on money. If they don’t get it, they die the way you die without air, without side-meat. It is a sad thing, but it is so. It is just so.”

It is just so. That is the dark reality of things. Things are not the stuff of life in themselves. When the desire or collection of things is perceived

Editor to page 3

<sup>1</sup> Colloquial reference meaning “to go after” or “to seek.” Has inferences of hunting or eyeing [meat] as a cat might hunt its prey.

## From the Mann himself Key lime temptation



By John Mann  
Seminary Pastor

Melvin is a 50’ish male who lives on the Alzheimer’s wing of Mother’s Nursing Home. He is tall, lean and boyishly good looking, but has no capacity to communicate with language. He often wanders around the dining room during meals lusting after the desserts of others. One afternoon recently, I saw him reach for the dessert of a woman at the far end of Mother’s table. Adopting my best confirmation pastor’s voice, I said “Melvin, thou shalt not steal!” He stopped in his tracks. He didn’t move. He stood, statuesque for nearly ten minutes, looking longingly at the dessert but not moving to act on his desire. Finally, I said to him, “Melvin, you are being led into temptation.” He looked at me, murmured something incomprehensible and shook his head. Then he went back to his chair.

It was a wonderful, if simple, reminder to me of how we can let ourselves entertain temptations that can lead us to behave in ways we know we shouldn’t.

Not that we are easily tempted by another’s pie. But it is easy for us to take, use or pretend ownership of thoughts, words and ideas that belong to others. In an academic community, the most frequent larceny is the use of others’ writing on academic products without attribution. We are often tempted to let others do our work for us. When we give in to such temptation, we steal from another just as dramatically as if we appropriated their wallet for ourselves. We are, as Luther suggests, to “let all people know, then, that it is their duty, on pain of God’s displeasure, not to harm their neighbors, to take advantage of them, or to defraud them by any faithless or underhanded business transaction. Much more than that, they are also obligated faithfully to protect their neighbors’ property and to promote and further their interests, especially when they get money, wages, and provisions for doing so.”

Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*

## CONCORD

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# A common thief

**By Dan Foster**  
Ecumenical Student  
M.Div. Junior

Stealing, the Seventh Commandment, is an easy commandment to follow! In our modern society we have a price on everything and can buy whatever we want, as long as we can put down the cash (or credit) for it. We know how much effort we have to put forth to purchase that new computer, burger or a new piece of furniture, but walking out of the store without paying for an item would be cause for arrest and the law would come down upon us with vigor. In one of the grander cases, we see this happening currently with Bernard Madoff and the Ponzi scheme he ran.

The medieval Jewish scholar Rashi viewed this commandment, in the context of what we now name the “Ten Commandments,” as “do not kidnap.” That is, do not take someone’s life for your own benefit. When you take another human being and force them to do your work for little benefit to themselves, you are stealing their life.

In our modern context, Americans do not have slaves that are bought and sold. But, most of what we purchase these days is made

for us by people who are paid less than the cost of living in their part of the world. Even here in the United States, many of the services that we use, such as fast-food restaurants and retail shopping, pay their workers an amount that does not break the poverty level.

It is very hard to not be caught up in this cycle. We see it evidenced in the clothes we wear, the places we shop and the retirement funds in which we invest. When we really look at this system, we can see how the purchase of many of these goods can contribute to stealing a person’s life by participating in a cycle that forces him or her to work for wages that cannot keep them or their families fed, sheltered and healthy.

This interpretation is radical in a sense; it is incredibly hard, if not impossible to follow this commandment in light of this view. That’s the point of each of the Ten Commandments. They are hard to keep. These rules orientate us toward God. God allows us the space to reflect upon where we have failed to live up to the Commandments and to see how we can improve so that we may become, as John Wesley puts it, “the mind which was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked.” And to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

# Take a little piece of my heart

**By Laura Aase**  
M.Div Intern, Syracuse, NY

I’ve been robbed! Well, that’s not quite true. In fact, I think perhaps I’ve aided and abetted in the whole “thou shalt not steal” realm of things. To really dig into this, I had to actually get out the Small Catechism to remind myself of the meaning of the 7th commandment. All together now (with your eyes closed): We are to fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor’s money or property, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his property and means of making a living.

There is a group of people here at church that I, for lack of a better term, will refer to as “The Wednesday Night People.” I call them “The Wednesday Night People” because that is when they come to church, even though many of them also attend on Sunday morn-

ing as well. Wednesday night is my favorite part of the week as well as the part that wears me down to a fine, thin blue flame, begging for air. These Wednesday night folks live right on the edge. They are constantly being evicted or hospitalized. They are in need of food, a ride, bus tokens and information about a new place to live. Often, they smell. Their cell phones are always in a state of being shut off by the phone company or turned back on with a new number. Some sell drugs and some are clearly using. Some have done jail time, some have spouses in jail and there are many kids who are related to many other kids, but I haven’t been able to get a family tree figured out. They are white and black and brown.

Public assistance is how many of these folks live. A few have jobs, or are looking, or talking about looking. When the money is gone, my phone really starts to ring. They

ask for my help. There are days my cell phone rings and rings, and sometimes I answer and sometimes I don’t.

There are times I get to the end of a day and feel completely duped. Taken. Like I’ve contributed to laziness and supported a system that’s broken, enabling someone. And maybe some days that is true. But on most days, I have found that in some small way I help someone improve or protect or at least relocate their property and help them to take one step forward in their life. Some days I talk like Jesus and tell them that they are loved. Some days I live as Jesus calls me to live, hauling birdcages and buying bus tokens, even when it goes against reason or expectation. My “means of making a living” has been greatly impacted through knowing these people. They have increased my capacity to love, especially in the face of my own discomfort.

## Editor from page 2

as life-giving, they become the monster of Steinbeck’s novel. Things take on the character of wrath and perpetual requirement for more.

Leave it to the machines of government and trade to make the rules of distribution. But the machines of wealth, while made of men, cannot be controlled by men. As Steinbeck puts it, those machines of distribution – of things - finally “are not like men.” God would agree. The purpose of things in this world is to sustain life. Life requires neighbors. Food, clothes, home, family, daily work and all you need

from day to day comes from the hand of God by exchange and gift of neighbors. Our taboos about things come to a halt when they are no longer used to feed the monsters of status and power, one neighbor against the other. Rather, in faith we have eyes to see our neighbor not monsters swallowing up the stuff of this world in greedy frenzy, but as those we are delighted to provide for, for richer or for poorer. In faith we trust our many neighbors to see us and to provide with a joyful heart as well.



# Money, Mercedes, rusty pickups, other things to steal

By Dennis Gelinek

M.Div. Junior

I have been around quite a bit in the last couple of years and I have found myself wondering what in the world have we come to? How can it be that everything in society is driven by material things? I grew up in a middle-to-high income neighborhood in the city of Hamburg, Germany, and had what I would call a *behütete* (protected) childhood and adolescence. But after getting out of school and having been back and forth between different cities in Germany and a nine month mandatory stint in the German army, I realized that the cars lining up at the curb in front of my house were not the same everywhere. It was “comforting” for me to come back to a street lined with big Mercedes, Porsches, BMWs, an occasional Ferrari and luxury edition of other brands, but it also made me wonder how it came to this. In the small town of Hermannsburg in Lower Saxony, where I went to seminary for three years, there were still some “nice” cars to be found. But more often than not people were driving the same cars for many years and those were often held together by glue and prayer. Coming to the U.S.,

be it in Mississippi or Minnesota, I made similar observations. With the difference that the “nice” cars are parked in private garages and not on the street curb and that the rusty pickups were held together by prayer and duct tape.

Why am I talking about cars? I think cars are one of the most visible signs of wealth and the split that is going through society. I could also be talking about clothes or houses, but in a way, across borders and oceans, cars are often what unite us. Cars have always been the obsessions of society since their inventions. Today this is most obviously shown in Hollywood films like *Gone in 60 Seconds* or *The Fast and the Furious*, where cars become the focal point of life. Cars are status symbols and even if you cannot afford one, the intended auto purchase must be the right brand. This is the idea young people grow up with and it is not only cars, but also clothes and other personal items. If an item becomes a requirement to belong in a group, then if enough pressure is there, people are likely to bend not only themselves but also the law.

Stealing becomes the option of belonging to a group, not as an “initiation rite” like it may have been in the past, but because you must steal what you cannot afford. This is something that, in my experience, is not limited to a certain country but is a global phenomenon. Everyone that has ever stolen something knows that once the line is crossed, the possibilities that have opened beyond that line are endless. So begins a life of theft. But as recent events show, stealing is not an activity for only the young or the needy, but is evident in almost all stages of life and all classes. Be it the moment you decide to cheat on your tax return or embezzle a couple of millions on the side, thievery may be bold or simply cutting corners. It only stops when one is called to account. So it seems that this is not a problem of a specific group of people but an activity against the neighbor which drives many in society to participate.

Now, I find myself trying to differentiate between Germany and the United States; between good old Europe and the “New World.” However, thanks to globalization not only do we have the same music and fast food chains, we also have the same problems driving our societies apart. There are still lots of things done differently in both continents, but the different approaches aim at the same problem. The welfare state in Germany is better developed to take care of the poor and jobless, but this only barely, if at all, covers the split within society. The poor get poorer, the rich get richer and everybody looks to someone else to solve the problem. While we are pointing, managers take huge lump-sums of money out of failing companies and flee to the tax-havens.

So what can we do? On a global and personal level, we have to move beyond protectionism. If all we ever think is how to protect what we have and do not consider others, then we lose ourselves. Our countries do not exist because of what we have, but because of who we are. If material things control us and if, instead of building relationships, we build walls around what we have then we are headed toward a dark place. Entering into relationships with other people, be it on a global or a personal level, is always uncertain and perhaps frightening, but it can be the most rewarding thing for all parties involved! So, let’s use our things and resources to build bridges, not walls!

## In the next CONCORD

Let’s give them something to talk about. Let’s give them something to figure out. And that’s exactly what we’re going to do. Our next issue is all about:

### Gossip

Because there’s nothing more interesting than the life and times of your neighbor. We’re getting all soap opera on you in this next issue, as we wonder how your world turns. Soaps, reality television, and tuning into see our favorite desperate housewife are spotlights into the world of others. We wonder how we add up – and then compare notes over lunch.

Commandment Eight has to with your tongue – more specifically, what and who you use your tongue to talk about. In lieu of reality SemTV (setting up secret satellites in Sandgren, Stasi-style, for campus-wide entertainment) we thought we’d let you speak for yourselves. What’s the intrigue about others? God certainly knows we have a propensity and drive to betray, slander and lie about our neighbor. God wouldn’t have put mentioned it in the commandment otherwise. What’s our deal?

So get some smack-talk off your chest and send in your articles. We’ll try to explain your actions in the kindest possible way.

Articles are due **Monday, April 6.**

If interested in being solicited for articles in the future, please send an e-mail to [concord@luthersem.edu](mailto:concord@luthersem.edu). Pay rate is \$15 per article for less than half page and \$20 per article of more than half page.



# Tales of property redistribution

## Voracious thieving

By Jon Gathje  
M.Div. Junior

A music professor once told me to steal, and to steal often. He encouraged me to be a “voracious thief,” and so I did. I became a better musician and teacher not on my own, but by stealing a gesture from Helmuth Rilling or Robert Shaw, stealing a jazz lick from Miles Davis or Artie Shaw or stealing a teaching concept from Elliot Eisner or Edwin Gordon. Standing on the shoulders of giants (and stealing from them!), I was able to see much further than I ever could have on my own.

This professor also added an addendum to his stealing commandment: Throw back what you don’t like or what doesn’t fit (for example, Robert Shaw was a bit of a tyrant). *Both* the “stealing” and the “throwing back” demand equal attention. Good ideas are a dime a dozen. So are bad ideas. The truly *great* ideas, though, are much harder to come by and we need to grab them as they fly by.

Victor Weisskopf makes a similar point: “The only sin is if you hear a good idea and don’t steal it.” I would suggest the negative is also true: the only other sin is if you hear a bad idea and steal it anyway.

Our lives are full of the ideas and actions of others. Every class has them. Every church service we attend has them. Every lunch table has them. Every Bøckman, Gullixson or Northwestern Hall has them. But, if I’m to follow the instructions of my professor, I have two choices: “steal them” or “throw them back.” The next logical question is, “How do you decide what is worth stealing and what to throw back?” To that question, I’ll leave each to his or her own and to the Spirit.

Be bold to steal “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable” (Philippians 4:8). But also be bold to remember to keep your prerogative to throw a few things back. Gladly do *I* now steal J.S. Bach’s closing line: *Soli Deo Gloria*.

## An exchange of goods and services

By Erik Roth  
M.Div. Middler

A few years ago I found myself in Vientiane, Laos for a long weekend while my work visa was being processed. Instead of hiring a taxi to drive me around the city I decided to rent a motorbike from the hotel and drive myself. Not surprisingly, the bike was in bad shape. The transmission was shot and as a result it would stall every time I came to a stop.

As it happened, I was driving down one of the main streets getting ready to make a right-hand turn so I could check out a market when the light turned red. I slowed down but I didn’t want to stall the bike, so I just breezed through the turn. Almost immediately I was pulled over by two police officers. They asked to see my license, which was a problem since I didn’t have one. Then they asked to see my passport, which I also didn’t have because it was at the embassy. Then they wanted to see proof of ownership of the bike, which, of course, I also didn’t have. So, they proceeded to make various threats ranging from massive fines, confiscation of the bike, arrest and finally deportation. It seemed extreme that I would be deported for running a red light and I had a feeling they were fishing for a bribe. After their speech on how I should respect their culture, including references to American foreign policy forty years ago I said, “How about if I give you 10 dollars?” They looked at each other and spoke for a minute in Lao. Then the officer who spoke the more fluent English turned to me and asked, “What about my partner?” I was worried because ten dollars was all I had, so I said, “That’s okay. I have two five dollar bills.” Apparently, that was enough. I gave them the money and went on my way.

My challenge: Who is the thief and who is the victim? Am I the victim for losing ten dollars or a thief? Are the police officers victims for demoralizing themselves or thieves for taking my money?

## Theological kleptomania

By Jennifer Amos  
M.Div. Senior

Confession: I steal. I steal a lot. I don’t plan to stop stealing. In fact, I like stealing. I mostly steal one particular thing: ideas. I take one idea from this book, mix it with an idea from that website, add in something insightful one of my talented colleagues told me and walla: I have a sermon, something interesting to say at dinner, a bible study or a youth program. Rarely, if ever, have I had an idea that was all my own creation. In academic life we get around outright stealing by citing our sources. But listeners in the pew can’t see the footnotes in my sermon, and while I try to give appropriate credit for direct quotes I don’t often give credit for where I got my framework or illustrations. I simply steal them.

This used to really bother me. I actually felt really guilty about it

on regular basis. Then one day I had to come face to face with the fact that I was a chronic idea stealer. After preaching my second sermon on internship I had a man come up to me and ask if I had really written the sermon myself. I was taken aback by his question. What did he mean? Was that an insult or a compliment? Did I print out a ready made sermon from the internet? No, of course not. Did I come up with everything on my own? Not entirely, no. Could I honestly say I’d written the sermon myself since all of the ideas weren’t mine? After a moment of hesitation and moral deliberation I answered him with a slow, “yes.”

I thought about that exchange for several days after it had happened and eventually came to terms with and embraced the fact that I will always and forever be a chronic idea stealer. Yet, an honest idea stealer, quite thankful for the many shoulders I stand upon.



# Job description

By Frank Johnson  
M.Div. Middler

During any given day of CPE you may be asked to exorcise a demon from the Pentecostal patient who is vomiting uncontrollably. You may find yourself blessing such peculiar objects as a scalpel or a coffee machine. You might just end up being converted by the Baptist man who just got out of heart surgery. But most days, these don't all happen at the same time. Unless they do.

"Ok, here's the plan," said an elderly lady on the cancer floor. "My house is locked, so I can't go home, but you can get into my house if you climb through the window. Then, you can bring back my keys and I can bust out of this place."

I laughed. "I don't think that's in my job description."

**Lesson one.** Never assume the patient is joking. Hell hath no fury

like a patient whose chaplain just laughed off their completely ridiculous request.

Her eyes opened wide and even before she spoke, I knew I'd done it. "My entire life I have worked in the business world, hearing people say it's not in their job description. I'm so sick of people saying that."

**Lesson two.** Get as much information about a patient as possible. Would I have treated this lady's outburst at me differently had I known she served time in a correctional facility for attempted murder? Perhaps. Either way, knowledge is good.

Ten minutes later I returned to the same patient bringing word that she'd be able to go home in the next couple days. "You're an angel," she said. I cried a little, because she didn't kill me and I wasn't the antichrist to her anymore.

**Lesson three.** Everything is in your job description. You just don't know it yet.

# A CPE steal!

By Jeanette Bidne  
M.Div. Middler

Time flies fast and perhaps for you the inevitable unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) draws ever nearer. Why else would you be reading this very article? For those of you yet to complete this part of your journey, these tips, words of encouragement and pieces of advice are for you. Feel welcome to steal them if you wish! I hope they serve you well as you learn and grow from an experience that may feel like a pain in the... big toe on one day and an affirmation of your call on the next.

Share yourself! It may take time to trust your group and even your supervisor, but at some point take the risk and share yourself. Share your highs and lows, your time and compassion. What you put in will definitely make a difference in what you get out.

Take care of yourself! I cannot stress this enough. CPE can be rough. Self-care isn't selfish. When you're not participating in your CPE responsibilities, relax and sleep. Lots! Most importantly, find good friends outside of CPE to vent with. Share the entertaining stories you will have in abundance.

Engage with the staff! This took me a while. Staff can be a huge resource about patients and residents and, in my experience, they will be glad you are there.

Actively listen! At first, I was so scared that I wouldn't have the "right" words at the right time. In reality I learned that presence and a listening ear are most often the best pastoral care we can offer.

Live in God's promise of presence! No matter what situation you may find yourself in, I truly believe that God will be present with you and those you serve. Whether things go exceptionally well or are a little shaky, you are God's child and God loves you and will be with you through every minute.

Happy CPE!

# Trusting (when we really don't want to)

By Tryphine Olson Schruba  
M.Div. Senior

I have been thinking a lot about this business of calls lately. Last year, in the middle of internship, my husband accepted a call to South Dakota from Wisconsin where we had lived for 22 years. So we up and moved to South Dakota in January of 2008 with my heels dragging all the way. Then I returned to my internship in Wisconsin for six more months. I struggled with the move. I could not understand how if my husband felt called, why didn't I? I felt like Jonah after God called him the second time, thinking, "I'll go, but I sure don't want to!"

Now M.Div. graduates have received regional and synod assignments and I hear echoes of myself in some of their conversations. "No, I don't want to go to that synod! Surely God is not calling me there!"

Reflecting back on my husband's almost 31 years of ministry, I remember when he received a call to Pittsburgh eight days before we got married. We moved there six weeks later. It was not what we had in mind, but 31 years ago one did not question the system. His first call was both rewarding and frustrating. Mostly rewarding. We learned and grew and stretched ourselves. We learned a different culture and explored a new part of the country. We made lifelong friends. Seven years later we moved back to Wisconsin, closer to family since we had our two girls by then. We were there 22 years in two different calls. We made good friends again, had a good experience and grew.

Now I look toward South Dakota. I realize that God will use me wherever I am, whether it is what I planned or not. There are people there whose lives I can touch and whose lives will touch mine. It's not about me, it's about God. It is where God needs me. And it won't be forever.

I pray for all of us moving into new adventures in different places of the world. We are called to share the Good News of Jesus Christ wherever we are!



# Internship: Nothing short of Armageddon

**By Justin Ask**  
M.Div. Senior

We all have something to learn from those who have traveled similar paths before us. Middler students currently feeling high levels of anxiety over their upcoming internship placements can take comfort from those students who have experienced it and survived. It's a little known fact the R.E.M. hit song, *It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)*, was written as the band members awaited their internship placements.

*That's great, it starts with an earthquake,  
birds and snakes, an aeroplane*

*Lenny Bruce is not afraid. Eye of a hurricane,  
listen to yourself churn*

*World serves its own needs, don't  
misserve your own needs.*

The lyrics are impressive for their prophetic foresight of classmate Samuel L Jackson's internship experience, immortalized in the recent film *Snakes on a Plane*. However, the lyrics represent the uncertainty faced by the band members as they pondered what internship would be. The band anticipated that placement outside of their top choices would be nothing short of Armageddon: earthquakes, hurricanes, plagues of locusts, dogs and cats living together, etc. No doubt many of today's Middlers feel a similar fear. If not, you are vainly overconfident in your ability to impress others in an interview.

The message from R.E.M. is that despite

facing this "End of the World" decision, they felt fine, and you should too. Regardless of your internship placement, you will proclaim the Gospel to God's people. You will learn priceless knowledge of your own unique pastoral identity as you engage in ministry. God has called you to preach forgiveness into the lives of real people. No matter the context you find, you will encounter opportunities to do this as God makes God's appeal through you.

So relax and enjoy the time of uncertainty with those around you. And if this offers you little comfort, just remember, it's never too early to start stressing over First Call assignments.

## Shaky legs on solid ground

**By Tasha Genck**

Luther Seminary Class of 2008  
Pastor of Congregational Life, St. Andrew Lutheran Church (Eden Prairie, Minn.)

"You look like you're about fourteen years old up there." This is not the type of comment you want to get from members of your congregation while in your first call. But it is one that I unfortunately get a lot and it is quite obvious that my looks are not going to give me any sense of authority with my congregation. If looks don't help, your clothes might. It is true, if you wear a collar there is no mistaking what you do and what your role is supposed to be. The alb and stole on Sunday mornings make sure that people know you are up there for a reason. There is also the title. I can put "Revered" in front of my name. I have learned to reluctantly sign my emails "Pastor Tasha." However, with all of these signs of call and presence, authority is still elusive. I often wonder if someone will dress me down like Clint Eastwood did in "Gran Torino" when he told the new priest, "You're an over-educated 27 year-old virgin who knows nothing about life or death." Thankfully no one has. Yet.

Where does authority come from as we settle into our first calls? How do we establish that we are indeed pastors when we are put into a new congregation in a new town with a new staff and given a new title?

Within the first month of my call I met with the leadership group for our Alpha program. Part of my call as Congregational Life Pastor was to teach and act as the pastoral presence for the program. However, many of the members wanted nothing to do with me. Some of them thought I had come to spy on the program. Others thought I had come to kill it. I came into this meeting knowing none of this. I was blindsided when one of the leaders suggested that I should not teach the class and instead we should rely on the Nicky Gumbel videos instead. The new pastor could just be a spectator. My role as pastor had bought me no authority with this group. A collar would have been useless as they were already jaded about the pastoral staff.

I listened to their reasoning and gathered myself while saying a quick

**Shaky legs to page 9**

## Once you get there

**By Jason Burggraff**

Associate Pastor at First Lutheran Church  
(Sioux Falls, S.D.)  
Luther Seminary Class of 2007

There's something about the anticipation of change that is fun and scary all at the same time. It is all dreams, fears, excitement, anxiety, all rolled into one hard-to-describe emotion. So you're graduating and ready to move on to the next stage: parish ministry, more school, working at... (fill in the blank). No matter how well you've charted your future, by now, especially if you're in seminary, you know that your plans are only a "guideline" and you're really just along for the ride and not exactly sure where you're going to be a year from now. Even if you're not graduating and think you know exactly where you'll be a year from now, you may be in for a surprise too! There wasn't one spring in the six years I was a student at Luther Seminary when I truly knew what kind of excitement or trouble I would find myself in a year later. I found both!

While I can't claim to be an expert on the topic of transitions, now that I'm a year and a half into my first call I can tell you a bit about my own transitioning from school-life to pastor-life. I graduated with an M.Div from Luther in 2007 and by September, had taken a call at First Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. It was the beginning of a learning process that continues to this day. There were many transitions. Though first, even before the call, was the transition from student with concrete demands and expectations to the limbo between graduation and call. As you may already feel, this can be a bit unnerving when you do not know exactly where you'll end up: Talking with the Synod office, interviewing with congregations, talking with

**Once to page 12**



# Is enough enough?

By Nabeel Ashraf

M.Div Middler

Stealing sounds like such an antiquated concept to most of us. It reminds me of Aladdin running with a stolen loaf of bread while the royal guards with their gleaming swords chase him. Most of us like to think that we lead ethical lives and don't really steal from anyone. At least I would like to think so regarding myself and my partner, save a cookie here and there that we steal from IKEA customer service desks even when we are not waiting to be helped!

But if we don't really steal from one another, why have 1.2 million Americans lost their jobs in the last two months? Why have half a million Americans lost their homes in the last two years? And worse yet, why do we still have three billion people in the world living on under three dollars a day? A tall order one might say, and yet this is the lived reality for many among us.

In my MBA program at Bethel University, our class discussions often turned to equitable distribution of resources. Economic theory assumes that the wants are unlimited, resources are limited and human beings are irrational! A grim worldview one might say, but nevertheless, one rooted in reality. There is only so much in terms of wealth and natural resources that the world can offer, but some of us have bigger appetites and like our double portions.

With 4.65% of the world's population, the United States controls 32.9% of its wealth, and the richest 10 percent of her citizens have an income greater than 43% of the world's poorest. In my native Pakistan, per capita income is a little over \$1,000 per year. On the other hand, the US per capita income is over \$38,000 per year. Is something wrong with this picture?

The very idea of an "American Dream" promotes a sense of entitlement, even when the resources available to us cannot fulfill our dreams. As a result, we resort to taking from others that which is not ours in the first place: housing loans we cannot afford to pay back, credit cards averaging \$8,000 in debt, tax subsidies for inefficient production, bailouts for poorly managed industries, et cetera.

Father of modern Economics Adam Smith wrote, "All for ourselves and nothing for other people, seems, in every age of the world, to have been the vile maxim of the masters of mankind." I am not suggesting that the American people are solely responsible for scarcity. On the contrary, they are victims of the same iniquity that many others are experiencing. The economic difficulties that many of us are presently facing are rooted in attitudes toward consumption and wealth accumulation. At the time of her death in 2007, billionaire Leona Helmsley left \$12 million to her Maltese dog, and \$4 billion to her charitable trust to benefit dogs! While the philanthropic work of other billionaires overshadows Ms. Helmsley's poor taste, the fact remains that these \$4 billion are sufficient to sustain 1.6 million impoverished American families for a whole year! Perhaps Ms. Helmsley was all too familiar with Jesus' saying that the poor will always be with us.

What about us, the small fish? Do we steal from others? Here in America, we are a nation of "bargain hunters." This last Thanksgiving, one of the employees at a New York Wal-Mart store was trampled to death while a pregnant woman miscarried after being knocked down by a stampede of bargain hunters. It seems that "everyday low prices" are more important than life itself. The bargains that we push so hard for as consumers might be good deals for us, but someone else always



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**"The very idea of an 'American Dream' promotes a sense of entitlement."**

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pays a price for our savings. To put things into perspective, a \$0.99 baseball cap purchased at Wal-Mart means about \$2 in daily wages for the worker that produced that cap in Pakistan or Bangladesh; minimum wage and no health benefits for the Wal-Mart employee that sold you that cap; and extra burden on government resources when that underpaid Wal-Mart worker applies for state-assistance for healthcare and/or living expenses. Perhaps we don't realize just how much we take from others that which is not ours.

Bottom lines are important to us, but let us not forget that a bottom-line approach dehumanizes people and encourages differential treatment. Many of the manufacturers today look toward other countries for production in order to meet our expectation of "low prices." 70% of surveyed organizations in a 2005 Deloitte and Touche study outsourced their production to other countries solely to save costs. We know that the work force in many of the foreign factories producing for the US manufacturers is treated and paid less than fairly. For example, the conditions in Chinese factories are so appalling that Robert Rosoff, the Chairman of China Working Group writes, "Labor rights violations are so widespread in China that they can be presumed to exist until proven otherwise." Nike, Reebok and Wal-Mart are a few of the organizations that have been criticized for the sweatshop-like working conditions in their foreign factories.

I wish I could say there was an easy answer to the problems we are facing because of our attitudes toward consumption and wealth accumulation. While these are not the answers to all our problems, the following guiding principles can be helpful starting points:

- 1) Take no more than your fair share
- 2) Pay fairly from your resources for what you have taken.
- 3) Treat others like you would like to be treated if you were in their shoes.



# For richer or poorer: the truth about stealing

**By Mark Granquist**  
Visiting Prof, Church History

Stealing is a perennial problem in our world, and this is not a crime from which we are immune. Certainly there are degrees of stealing: some of us steal billions of dollars from investors or customers, but some of us steal penny-ante—a quarter here, a buck there—the small crimes, that magnified by millions and billions, tear at the fabric of society and divide us one from another. Just because our sins are small does not mean that they are any less of an offense. It just means that we are too chicken to go for the real big stuff. Mediocrity in sinning does not lessen the crime.

In his Large Catechism Martin Luther first goes after the small-time thieves, but then works his way around to the bigger crooks. He calls them “gentleman swindlers or big operators... who steal and rob openly... unmolested by anyone, even claiming honor from men. Meanwhile the little sneak-thieves who have committed one offense must bear disgrace and punishment so as to make the others look respectable and honorable.” In the contemporary context he might also go after those whose recklessness and greed have destroyed companies and entire economies, and then compound the sin by squandering government bailout money! Not much has changed in the world, really, in the last 500 years.

As damaging as these crimes are, in and of themselves, Luther is concerned with a larger issue, namely the way that stealing distorts relationships within the human community and between us and our Creator. Stealing destroys trust, and trust is what allows us to live in peace and harmony with our neighbors, and the whole realm of society is debased. And really, for what? Do we really get richer or more secure by our ill-gotten gains? Luther says, “In short, however much you steal, depend on it that just as much will be stolen from you. Any-one who robs and takes things by violence and dishonesty must put up with another who plays the same game.” There is no honor among thieves, even if you steal; this may be stolen in return from you. And if it is not stolen from you, the worry and the effort needed to protect your loot from others will turn you into a paranoid fool.

Yet, even this does not get to the basics of the matter about stealing. The act of stealing, bad as it is, is still not the root of the problem. Stealing, large or small, is at the base a symptom of a much greater spiritual issue. I once heard a story about parents who had adopted a

young girl probably around elementary school age. As the weeks went along and the girl settled into the family, the parents were distressed to realize that the girl was stealing things from them. It wasn’t much, a few coins here, a few trinkets there, cans of food and other mundane items. Still the parents were hurt. Hadn’t they given the child a home and a family? Was this how she was repaying them? They eventually found her “stash,” and confronted her about the stealing. The girl’s response was enough to move the parents to tears. She told them she was afraid that this wonderful new situation was only temporary and that soon she’d be on her own again. She needed the things she was stealing in order to “get by.”

At root, even beyond greed and revenge, the base motive for theft, large and small, is a lack of trust. We’d better take care of ourselves by any means necessary because as good as we might have it now, all those possessions that we treasure could be taken away from us, even in an instant - and then where would we be? Luther reflects further about this: “Here you have a rich Lord. Surely he is sufficient for your needs and will let you lack or want for nothing. Thus, with a happy conscience you can enjoy a hundred times more than you could scrape together by perfidy and injustice. Whoever does not desire this blessing will find wrath and misfortune enough.” Ultimately our theft, like most all our sins, comes from the idolatry that would have us trust in self and goods, and not in others and in God. The root of this sin is distrust and this distrust consumes us, separating us from God and one another.

In the 19th century the largest and most successful of the many communal groups that were established to form “heaven on earth” was the Shakers. In their Shaker villages all goods were owned in common, and nothing was held as a private possession. Though this was not always easy to uphold (human sin invades even our attempts at “heaven on earth”) they worked pretty hard on developing a culture of trust and dependence on God. Though they worked hard and produced much, they tried to see all they had as a gift from God and not to be hoarded selfishly. In one Shaker community they became aware of the fact that crows and human thieves were stealing produce from their gardens at night. Their response? They planted larger gardens, because as they put it, “Thieves and crows have to eat, too.” Say what you will about the Shakers, but at least they got the seventh commandment right! Perhaps we can, too.

## Shaky legs from page 7

prayer, “Um, God? Help!” I had no idea where I could find any authority or voice with this group that had seemingly already made up their mind about me. So I did all I could do. I spoke. I defended myself. I reminded them that God had been a part of what had brought me here. I talked about my vocation, my call to this place at this time for this purpose. I talked about my passion for God and this ministry that God had established even before I had arrived.

They listened and they were receptive to

the words I had spoken. They debated and then came to a consensus to let me teach the class. Those who had vehemently opposed me at the beginning even offered to pray for me.

I learned that night that titles, fancy clothing and looks do not give authority. Instead, God’s Word does. Somewhere between the plea for help and the words I spoke, God moved in and gave the words I needed. They were words that hearkened back to God’s Word and promise in scripture and his call to all of us to preach the Good News. I

have found that even if I look like I’m fourteen, God’s Word gives me authority when I preach and lead worship, when I teach about the Bible and talk about God’s work in the world. I have seen that the Word has power to move hearts and minds as it did the night of the meeting. Authority can be tricky to navigate as a First Call pastor. Thank goodness it ultimately does not rely on our clothing, looks, title or even on us, but on God’s Word alone.

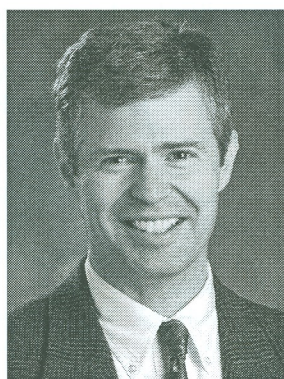


# Pulpit plagiarism

By David Lose

Assoc Prof., Biblical Preaching

The year before I enrolled in seminary I taught at a prep school in Indiana. In mid-April the school celebrated Parents Weekend, one of the major events of the school year. The chapel that Sunday morning was packed and I knew the chaplain was under pressure to deliver a great sermon. And he did. It was well crafted, worked creatively with the text and proclaimed the gospel in a way that was both moving and accessible. It was, in short, a big hit with both the kids and their parents.



Trouble was it wasn't his sermon. Two weeks earlier, you see, I'd been visiting the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. While there, I was given a copy of John Vannorsdall's "Dimly Burning Wicks," a collection of his sermons. Vannorsdall was then president of the Seminary and a fine preacher, and so in the days since my visit I'd been reading through his book—which was why I was so surprised to see in the bulletin for chapel that April morning that the sermon was entitled "Dimly Burning Wicks." What a coincidence, I thought. Except it wasn't. It was Vannorsdall's sermon word for word. WORD FOR WORD! The guy didn't even try to embellish or adapt it for the context.

I never told the chaplain I knew he had ripped off that sermon. But I never really respected him again.

"So what's the big deal," some may wonder. No one was hurt. I mean, it's not like Vannorsdall lost any royalties. Further, it was a really good sermon. The Word was preached and heard. Isn't that what really matters?

The issue with plagiarism from the pulpit is neither about property rights nor about the efficacy of the Word. It's about the integrity of the pastoral office. When you stand up and offer another's words as your own, it's not primarily that you're committing an offense against the original author (although of course you are), it's that you are lying to your congregation, misrepresenting yourself and devaluing the trust that is essential to effective pastoral ministry.

I'm not a homiletical donatist. I realize that the efficacy of the Word is not dependent on the integrity (or for that matter, even the ability) of the preacher. Because it is God's Word, God can use plagiarized words and compromised pulpits as means by which to grant faith. But if a congregation comes to mistrust a pastor who has passed another's words off as his or her own, their confidence in their preacher and in preaching in general, erodes.

Furthermore, it is not just sermons out of another preacher's book. The same goes for sermons off the internet and canned illustrations and stories that you tell in the first-person. If you are passing another's words off as your own, you are compromising not only your integrity but that off the pastoral office more broadly. Period.

With this in mind, let me offer some counsel in response to a few questions that may come to mind:

*What if I'm not a very good preacher?*

Keep working at it. Most of us won't learn to preach in a semester or even during a seminary career. But most of us can learn to preach well by consistently working at it. There are seminars, continuing education events, Doctor of Ministry programs and excellent print, audio and web-based resources that can help you. (Okay, so this is a shameless promotion of Luther's D.Min. in Biblical Preaching, Word and Word, the Center for Biblical Preaching's "In the Company of Preachers" and [workingpreacher.org](http://workingpreacher.org), but keep in mind, this is about the evils of plagiarism, not institutional self-promotion!)

*What if I'm not just "not very good," but am really a pretty bad preacher?*

Consider another line of work. Seriously. God can use you lots of places. Or, at least consider hiring a partner who is a good preacher and letting him or her do most of the preaching.

*Do I have to cite everything I use? Won't that make my sermons a little boring?*

Actually, I don't think you have to cite everything. You can usually get away with "As one commentator writes..." or "As a preacher once said..." Cite the author in a footnote to your manuscript, but you don't have to cite him or her in your delivery. Remember, it's not primarily about property rights, it's about integrity. Acknowledging that a thought, line, or striking image wasn't your own is often enough.

*So when do I cite someone?*

Three specific times, at least. 1) When it's a complex or extended sentence or paragraph. If you use a lot of someone else's thoughts, it's best to cite them directly. It would probably feel odd to your hearer if you didn't. 2) When the author is somewhat well known. By citing her or him you establish contact between your sermon and the cultural background you share with your congregation. 3) When there is identity-strengthening value. That is, if the quotation is from a major figure in your church tradition or congregational history, then citing that person directly can reaffirm the listeners' own awareness of and connection to their tradition.

*Didn't Martin Luther write sermons for others to preach? Didn't he say, in fact, that if you can't preach you should use some one else's work?*

Yes. But does this look like the 16th century? What may have been accepted practice then, is not today. If it breaks trust or violates reasonable expectations (even culturally conditioned expectations), you've done damage to yourself and to the office you hold. (Besides, Luther said and did a lot of things you probably wouldn't want to say or do today.)

*So can I ever preach someone else's sermons?*

Sure, just tell your congregation when you're doing it. And don't do it too often or you'll end up looking really lazy.

Bottom line: When you preach you're stepping into Mary's shoes: clothing God's Word in the flesh of your own words. You can do it. So do it.



# The skies are blue with yellow stripes

By Mark Nygard  
Ph.D Student

I've been conscious of messing with our atmosphere since I was a kid wondering about the smoke coming out the exhaust pipe on the John Deere '70 corn cultivator. Where did it go, and what would it do up there? I imagined all the John Deere 70 corn cultivators in the world, all pumping their smoke, and it didn't feel good.

The big coal-fired power plant near Washburn, North Dakota has several furnaces ninety-six feet tall, as I remember. I've looked into the hatch of one. It's my impression of looking into hell with red-glowing air as far as one can see. I try not to imagine all the carbon dioxide coming out of just one of those furnaces. They make yellow streams across our skies, not just in North Dakota, but all around the world.

We were very patriotic about North Dakota, growing up. The state anthem had a line that went, "The skies are bluer than blue, the sun is sunnier too, and if you don't believe it there's only one thing to do," then the refrain, "Ya gotta go ta' North Dakota." It's no longer quite accurate. We'll have to change our state song to something like "The skies are blue with yellow stripes, it's all that smoke coming out of our pipes."

Why do we do this thing? Because we mindlessly use electricity. Sources on the internet like the Bonneville Environmental Foundation ([www.b-e-f.org](http://www.b-e-f.org)) suggest these power plants have to pump about a pound and a half of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere for every kilowatt hour of electricity we consume. That means a 100-watt light bulb burned for ten hours leaves a one-and-a-half pound carbon foot-

print. That may not sound like very much, but over a year it adds up. The average American family between the cars, home heating, air conditioning, and electricity consumption is responsible for some 35,000 pounds of greenhouse gasses every year.

To help us put this into everyday terms and perhaps help us save a wee bit, here are "Nygard's Calculations of Carbon Footprints" for some of our activities around Luther Seminary. This is the way we do the yellow sky in our lives:

Lights in one library stack aisle left on for an afternoon . . . . .	1 lb.
Lights in Gullixson 103 left on for an afternoon . .	5 lb.
Energy to drive a Toyota Prius to the airport and back. . . . .	10 lb.
Outdoor security lights on campus for one winter night . . . . .	94 lb.
Gasoline burned to drive our Ford Focus home to North Dakota . . . . .	.578 lb.
Electric bill for our Burntvedt apartment for February . . . . .	.835 lb.
Jet fuel making high altitude contrails on a flight to New York . . . . .	1183 lb.

The skies to page 15

## The Irresistible Revolution

By Colin Grangaard  
M.Div. Senior

I've decided to make like a bandit and use this spot to promote Shane Claiborne's *The Irresistible Revolution*. He's coming to St. Peter, Minnesota on April 23, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. to speak at Gustavus Adolphus College. He is a provocative personality and the figurehead of the new "urban monastic" movement.

On first glance I had thought that I would be encountering a naïve evangelical who was finally discovering that, yes, Christianity was meant to be lived out in community. Claiborne was mentored by Tony Campolo and transferred to Wheaton so that he could intern at Willow Creek. But, Claiborne has a bag of tricks up his sleeve that you might not have anticipated. The experiences that drive the motivation for much of his movement were born during the time he spent working alongside Mother Teresa in Calcutta, India.

*The Irresistible Revolution* actively illustrates, through Claiborne's story and his vision, the transformational power of the Gospel for each person, our relationships and the world we live in. He directs us to serve our neighbor to encounter Christ and saying,



Author Shane Clairborne

"The truth is that when people look at us like we are sacrificial servants, I have to laugh. We've just fallen in love with God and our neighbors, and that is transforming our lives" (133).

His perspective and contribution to our contemporary Christian conversation are communicated as a person highly skeptical and cynical of the institutional church. He quotes Cornell West saying, "We've taken the blood from the foot of the cross and turned it into 'Kool Aid' and marketed it all over the world" (112). In response, he very actively works with congregations to form relationships with the poor, outcast and homeless. He directs us to Tony Campolo's words as a source of motivation. "Jesus never says to the poor, 'come find the church,' but he says to those of us in the church, 'go into the world and find the poor, hungry, imprisoned,' Jesus in his disguises" (102). I was edified by the hope that was evident through his organizations' active partnerships in spite of his confessed cynicism and I was excited that his inspiration came from theologians as diverse as Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer, St. Francis, Tony Campolo and Billy Graham. I can't wait to hear him.



# Grand state theft

By Lydia Nelson  
M.Div Middler

The Rotunda was packed with people. Men, women, old, young, all gathered around a platform with a bold banner emblazoned with a call to action. There was standing room only that Tuesday, March 19, 2009 as people milled around the Minnesota State Capitol and adjusted their clerical collars as they waited for the program to begin.

No, this was not “just some political rally.” This was an event called “Clergy Speak their Voices,” organized by Lutheran Social Services in Minnesota (LSS) and Catholic Charities. It was a day to meet with our representatives and remind them that “the budget is a moral document.”

How can our state budget be a moral document? How can we, as future faith leaders, dare to approach our elected officials in this time of economic hardship? Because there might be less money, doesn't

that give them license to cut certain aid benefits out of the budget to keep the state afloat?

Wrong. What we do with our money tells other where our values lie. If a thing is important to us, then it is worth spending money on. In these economically challenging times the needy are even more in need. That day in the Rotunda I heard stories of families selling their kitchen tables to pay for medication. Instead, the state budget should invite these families to come to the table: the table of sharing and compassion.

The state budget is a moral document. To forget the poor, especially now when it is least convenient to do so, is misusing the money that we have contributed to the state. It is, in a sense, stealing from us all.

But of course it is not out of some obligation to moral command that we gathered in the Rotunda that day. It was out of the belief that God cares for all people and God sometimes works through people, even politicians, to accomplish this.

## Theological Superhero of the Month: St. Augustine of Hippo



- Strengths**
- Don't mess with his posse—the Order of St. Augustine!
  - If he doesn't get you, his momma will.
  - He'll bust you up like a Pelagian, but don't blame Auggie, he didn't have a choice!
  - He always made a great case to JUST WAR!

- Weaknesses**
- Took him a year and 50 pounds of kelp to realize there was no connection between Manicheans and Manatees
  - Breaks down at the sight of pears
  - Still not REALLY ready for chastity
  - Can't sleep with "Take up and read" ringing in his ears all night, every night

### Once from page 7

the Synod office some more, receiving a call, negotiating salary package, talking with the Synod office yet again (they want to get you in a call too, after all!). With some time and conversation, it all comes along. So if you're blessed with a bit of a "layover" between seminary departure and First Call arrival, take advantage of this time. Visit friends and family, see some cool places and try to relax. The call will come, as mine did. Then it's time to load up the moving van and go! All of a sudden my social network went from mostly people my own age and in situations similar to my own, to lots of people older than myself, (and many younger too) who's lives were different than my own. Yet many were

eager to open their lives to me and wanted to learn about my life as well. Some just wanted me to remember their name. Schedules change and the weekly rhythm of life has changed a lot as well, from fairly structured as a student, to a funny mix of flexible and busy as a pastor. Speaking of congregational life, a piece for any transition and any vocation really, is something I'm continuing to learn: the importance of four words, "Thank you" and "I'm sorry." Use them often and use them well!

The biggest transition though, has to be going from the position of student, which for me was going from "quiet Jason," to being known by many as "Pastor Jason" who has

a public voice and a Word to share. All of a sudden people all around town knew me and I didn't often know them. All of a sudden I was entrusted with the job of giving them the promises of Christ, even when I felt like I needed to hear it a little more myself. Every once in a while, at the strangest times, I still can't quite grasp the enormous responsibility that a congregation has entrusted to me. We say to Jesus, "You have the words of eternal life," yet the congregation calls you and me to speak that Word of Life for their sake and hand it over in the things of water, wine and bread. What work, what wonder and what fun. Enjoy!



# Faith and Money

By Erica Kennedy and Stephanie Vos (M.Div Junior)

"Do Not Rob God" is the scripture heading in my NRSV bible for Malachi 3:8-15. What does that mean for us in light of this Concord's focus on "You shall not steal"? After doing a little digging through Malachi and the notes in other study bibles, it seems there is an ongoing argument throughout the book between the people of Israel. Israel questions God's love for them and Malachi argues on behalf of God that the people of Israel have not been faithful. When we get to 3:8-15 in particular, Malachi launches into a stewardship argument. He sets up the contrast between scarcity and abundance, stating that the people of Israel have been robbing God by bringing less than a full tithe (10% based on the law outlined by Deuteronomy 14:22-29) to the community storehouses. The people of Israel have been living the myth of scarcity. But why? Out of fear? Fear that the locusts will destroy the crop? Fear that the vine might remain bare? Then, verse 10 cuts to the bone of the weary faithful who have taken life into their own hands, so to speak, with the outpouring of God's challenge and the promise of God's abundance. God says, "Bring the full tithe into the store house, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing." Since everything is created by God and we are called to be the stewards of God's stuff, including money, are we in fact stealing from God by withholding it? Is this how it played out for Ananias and Sapphira as their story is told in Acts 5?

Focusing on this text, it might seem legalistic and very close to that slippery slope of prosperity theology when God rewards giving exponentially according to what is given. Legalism and prosperity theology are not where we are going here. Rather, let's remember God's action in these verses: God challenges the floundering faithless and says, "Put me to the test...see if I will not open the windows for you and pour down overflowing blessing (v. 10)." Unlike prosperity theology, this is not an automatic exponential monetary return from God's investment bank, but rather by bringing the full tithe, the heart and action of the giver is changed. We return to God what rightfully belongs to God and are blessed as we acknowledge that it really belongs to God anyway. We are only called to be stewards (not hoarders or misers) of God's stuff on earth. The giver then faithfully lives on the 90% (or maybe even 80% if they decide to save a little, especially in today's economy) and the giver's full tithe meets up with other tithes. The poor have food to eat. When considering how this might look in your life, keep one thing in mind: Thou shalt not steal.

## Quality control



By Karen Treat

Seminary Parish Nurse

*You shall not steal.  
(Exodus 20:15)*

My son was three when we realized he was a thief. We discovered that he had hidden many of his sister's possessions in his closet. He did so in such a way that no one noticed they had gone missing.

After realizing Charlie's delinquent behavior, he received condemnation from his sisters and a short lecture from his parents on the path of self destruction through thievery.

Charlie is not a thief. What Charlie was experiencing was the arrival of another sibling and feeling a little confused on where he fit into the family. He wanted a sense of control, as well as adventure. As far as I know, my ten-year-old no longer steals from his sisters.

We encounter stealing all around us. I have admit I watch "Desperate Housewives" and in the recent shows one of the husbands has become addicted to stealing from anyone he feels has slighted him. It gives him a feeling of control and adventure. This character sounds a lot like my son, Charlie.

I wonder how stealing relates to health and wellness? The reasons Charlie and the husband on "Desperate Housewives" stole were to gain control and enjoy the exhilaration of adventure. I think many of us have behaviors that reflect wanting increased control or a sense of satisfaction that also affect our health and wellness. Emotional eating anyone?

Unhealthy behavior is often a conscious decision. For instance, I choose to not drink the water recommended to me to stay healthy. I choose to eat the two servings of cookies rather than just one and, as much I hate to admit, I choose to watch "Desperate Housewives" instead of walking on the treadmill. Really, there is always time for exercise.

Are these unhealthy behaviors stealing? They are stealing from my physical health, stealing years from the end of my life and most of all these behaviors could steal from my abilities in ministry. Stealing isn't just about taking something from another. It is also about taking what would bring glory to God.

## 4th Annual Silent Auction and Variety Show

### Schedule

4:30-5:45 p.m.—Silent Auction (view items, bid)  
5-6 p.m.—Enjoy a budget friendly meal in dining services  
6:30 p.m.—Entertainment and live auction begins.

The beneficiaries in 2009 will be: International Student Scholarship Fund and The Center for Changing Lives

**Thurs., March 26, 2009 • 4:30 p.m.**  
**Chapel of the Incarnation, Olson Campus Center**



# Sweet Sound of Speculation

By Jeni Grangaard

M.Div. Senior

How is the new U2 album *No Line on the Horizon*? It depends who you ask. The magazines *Rolling Stone* and *SPIN* gave the album 5 out of 5 stars; an instant classic. Pitchfork Media and other independent sources gave it about a 4.2 out of ten; a waste of time. Whether or not you like the album seems to be a reciprocal relationship to whether or not you like the lead singer of U2, Bono.

For being a well-known leader and lead singer, Bono has received much criticism. In a 2004 interview with Bono for *SPIN Magazine*, Chuck Klosterman sought to discern if Bono is authentic or arrogant, just another shallow musician who wears his heart on his sleeve to garner support and generate buzz. Though Klosterman concludes that Bono is slightly arrogant, he continues, "it doesn't matter if you're arrogant if you're right." Though he is an unbelievable character, the work that U2 has done in and for the world to fight AIDS and forgive debts has gone above points not to arrogance and self-importance, but to subservience and meekness.

The album sings like the Gospel of John, packed with symbols and meaning beyond the surface of listening. Like John, in U2's music, "a child can wade and an elephant can swim." The faithful and mystic curiosity of the band once again offers different expectations and avenues for music and popular culture. To get beyond the surface, I'll turn to reviews, conversations, the Bible and consult our local U2 guru, Dr. Chris Scharen.

In conversation around the album, I've been in touch with Matt Staniz, a Lutheran pastor from Philadelphia, who says, "I don't think the 21st century world (and music industry) allows a record to have the kind of overwhelming impact as 'The Joshua Tree' did in 1987. That being true, this new record might be just as good in some ways... and in some ways better."

"Magnificent" is based on the Magnificat from Luke 2 and speaks to themes of creation and fall. "I was born to be with you/ in this space and time/ after that and ever after/ I haven't got a clue/only to break rhyme/ this foolishness can leave a heart black and blue/ only love can leave such a mark/ but only love can heal such a scar/... Justified till we die, you and I will magnify the magnificent." When they played it on The David Letterman show, Dave greeted them and said, pounding on his chest, "I can just feel that right here."

My favorite song on the album, "Moment of Surrender" is quite possibly one of the best songs they have ever recorded. In my mind there is no better review than the one from Rob Sheffield at *Blender Magazine*:

"'Moment of Surrender' is the high point - seven minutes of Bono in gospel mode, lost in the late-night city ('I was speeding on the subway/Through the Stations of the Cross'), questing for salvation and finding it in Adam Clayton's bass. The Edge fleshes out the yearning with some piercing crazy-diamond guitar. It's the kind

of gimme-divinity anthem that U2 cut their teeth on, except it really does seem like they've gotten better at these songs now that they've picked up some bummed-out adult grit. Bono actually sounds scared of something in this song, and whether his nightmares are religious or sexual, the fear gives his voice some heft. Compared to "Moment of Surrender," "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" just sounds like a callow kid trying to snag a date at Bible camp."

With the reference to speeding through the Stations of the Cross while riding the subway, "Moment of Surrender" recognizes the brokenness in contemporary life. It also recognizes the end of brokenness referencing Revelation 21 when God will wipe away every tear. U2 phrases it "[every one was] counting down till the pain will stop."

On the surface, "Unknown Caller" sounds like another trite tune written during sheer boredom in an airport and yet there is a sense of gravity in it: exile and return from exile. "I was lost between the midnight and the dawning/ in a place of no consequence or company/3:33 when the numbers fell off the clock face/ speed-dialing with no signal at all." Dr. Scharen reminded me that 3:33 is a throwback to the cover of the 2000 album "All That You Can't Leave Behind" with a sign for the J 33-3 train, which is a reference to Jeremiah 33:3 which reads, "Call to me

and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known."

Echoing 1 Isaiah, Bono sings, "Go, shout it out, rise up/ escape yourself and gravity/ Hear me, cease to speak that I may speak/ Shush now." The next line uses the metaphor of a MacBook operation to talk about exile: "Force quit and move to trash." Read Isaiah 6:9-13.

Just as the word of judgment was not the last word for Israel, U2 moves from judgment to hope, again through the metaphor of a MacBook: "Restart and re-boot yourself/ you're free to go/ shout for joy if you get the chance." Read Isaiah 40:1-11.

"White As Snow" continues the Isaianic trend. Isaiah writes, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow" (Isa 1:18). If this article could sing, it would hum the tune, "Veni, Emmanuel," better known as "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." The song "White As Snow" offers Advent's lament of waiting and wanting. "White As Snow" laments, "Once I knew there was a love divine/Then came a time I thought it knew me not/ Who can forgive forgiveness where forgiveness is not/ Only the lamb as white as snow...Now this dry ground, it bears no fruit at all/ Only poppies laugh under the crescent moon/ The road refuses strangers/ The land, the seeds we sow/ Where might we find the lamb as white as snow?"

Perhaps these Irish rockers still haven't found what they're looking for, but this faithful and mystic album points them and us to Jesus the Christ and his cross, singing tenderly to those in the midst of exile, whispering that we too still haven't found what we're looking for and yet have it already in faith.



"The album sings like the Gospel of John, packed with symbols and meaning beyond the surface of listening."



# Calendar of events

By Marie Olson  
M.Div. Middler

## Como Park Conservatory— Spring Flower Display

March 21-26  
Small Donation Recommended

Growing up in the suburbs of St. Paul it has always been a family tradition to go to the Spring Flower Display at the Como Park Conservatory on Easter Sunday afternoon. Go see the sea of tulips, hydrangeas, lilies, peonies and daffodils! It's a great way soak up spring, even if Minnesota isn't quite blooming yet. <http://www.comozooconservatory.org/>

## RENT at the Orpheum

March 25-29  
\$18-\$80

Don't miss this Broadway favorite while it's in town! Never seen it before? Rent is "set in the East Village of New York City, RENT is about being young and learning to survive in NYC. It's about falling in love, finding your voice and living for today." <http://www.hennepintheatredistrict.org/>

## Minnesota Arboretum—Maple Syrup Tours and Pancake Brunch

March 28-29, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.  
\$11 non-members ages 8+, \$5.50 ages 4-7,  
Free for ages 3 and under  
Free tours of the Maple tree forest with explanation of where maple syrup comes from! Brunch includes Arboretum-made syrup, pecans, sausage links, juice, coffee and milk. The brunch also includes free admission to the

rest of the arboretum, so hope for a beautiful sunny day. <http://www.arboretum.umn.edu/>

## Northrup King Building— Open Artist Studios

April 2  
The first Thursday of every month the artists in the Northrup King Building open their studios for public viewing. Come check out the artistic variety ranging from textiles, paintings, photography, sculptures, jewelry, furniture and many other art forms. Also, don't miss the late night music and happy hour specials at The Red Stag Supper Club. The website also advertises picking up wooden nickels at the artist studios and then getting a free drink at the Red Stag Supper Club while supplies last.  
<http://www.northrupkingbuilding.com/>

## Riverview Theater

\$2-3 dollar movies  
Looking to see a movie but not interested in the hefty movie ticket prices? Check out the Riverview Theater; cheap movies, cheap treats, old 50's movie theater charm and movies that are only recently out of the main theaters. Only fifteen minutes from the seminary. There's also a great little coffee shop and a little wine shop right across the street if you're interested in making an entire evening out of it! <http://www.riverviewtheater.com/>

## Minnesota Institute of Arts

\$0  
Opening April 3, 2009 an exhibition on the Holy Land with Photographs by Sara Belleau

and Sin and Guilt Paintings by Nancy Robinson. This exhibition is only open through May 31 but a great opportunity into the artist world of expression related to what is happening in the Holy Land. <http://www.artsmia.org/>

## New Seahorse Display at Underwater Adventures!

Adult \$18.95, Kids (2-12) \$11.95, Tiny Kids (2 and under) Free  
An immersion experience not to be missed! It is a little on the pricier side but the seahorses are well worth the money! Your kids will lose seeing and learning about these marine creatures! <http://www.underwaterworld.com/>

*Now that you've learned some moves at the Luther Seminary Spring Swing do you want to continue dancing? Check out these dance venues for both Swing and other fun dancing.*

## Tapestry Folk Dance Center

\$6-11  
Every Thursday the tapestry folk dance center offers swing lessons if you need to brush up from 6:30-9:30 p.m., then starting at 10:00 p.m. its open floor dancing! Check out their website for details about prices and other nights to go dancing. <http://www.tapestry-folkdance.org/>

## Wabasha Street Caves

\$7  
Every Thursday come on down for swing dancing from 7:00-10:00 p.m., doors open at 6:00. Live bands every week. Check out their website for details! <http://www.wabashastreet-caves.com/>

## The skies from page 15

In 2007 my family figured we were able to keep about 3600 lb. of carbon out of the air by using public transport. In 2008 I blew it all flying to Senegal. On an average day I turn off between 100 and 200 fluorescent lights around the seminary. We blow it all in an average night sending half our seminary's outdoor night lighting unused into the sky.  
I am one of the few students here with grandchildren on campus. Pauline and Larry Crowder's kids, Michael, 3, and Joshua, 5, are the sweetest little fellows that a grandfather could ask to have. I am concerned about the future I am giving them by the way I throw around yellow stripes in the sky. It might be said that if we do nothing to change our lavish carbon flow, we are stealing from Michael and Joshua and their friends the climate and seasons that we have enjoyed all these years. Who would have thought we could do such a thing!?

It adds new dimensions to my confession that Jesus died for the sins of the world. Usually I think of private and relatively inconsequential sins. Breaking a planet—possibly the only livable planet in the universe—is a rather larger sin than I had imagined having to put on him. It seems about as consequential a sin as you get. Is there forgiveness for this?  
It adds a new dimension to my hunger for a word of absolution, too. When it comes on Sunday morning, or in chapel, will I hear it for even the "really big" sins, too? Listen. For such a sin as this, "your sins are forgiven." For clouding the skies and heating the air, "your sins are forgiven." For breaking the jewel of the universe, "your sins are forgiven." For making it unlivable for your children and grandchildren, "your sins are forgiven." Is there that much forgiveness?! Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.



## The Concord asks...

### What has life at Luther Seminary stolen from you?

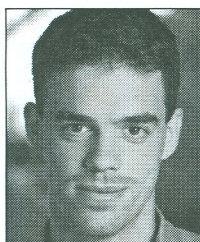


"My Freedom."

—Scott Fielder  
M.Div. Middler

"Seminary stole my intelligence."

—Mary Stoneback  
M.A. Junior—CYF



"My beautiful blue winter coat. It was stolen from the computer lab. Disappeared, never to be seen again. I have been so depressed I could not buy another one."

—Dennis Gelinek, M.Div. Junior

"My freedom to listen to a sermon without wondering what I would have said instead..."

—Jonathan Davis  
M.Div. Middler



"My life." (She said with an all-knowing senior smile)

—Sarah Harrold  
M.Div. Senior

"Luther has stolen all of my free time and any chance of easily finding a husband (you go to seminary?...whelp, see you later)."

—Cassie Sauter  
M.Div. Middler



## Down the Hill

Luther Seminary through  
younger eyes

# Stolen comfort

By Sadie Arends (age 2 weeks)

Daughter of David and Arianna Arends

Whoa. I'm waking up in some sort of plastic box, surrounded by beeping noises, lights on boxes, tubes and wires, and after the day I've had it's just too much to be believed. I mean, it wasn't long ago that I was happy, warm and contentedly sloshing around in some nice amniotic fluid, when suddenly, out of nowhere, there's squeezing, screaming, thrashing around, and...



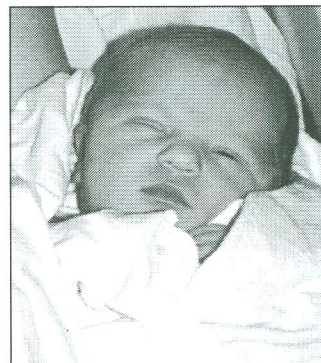
Sadie: Comfortable in the womb

Oh, right. I should probably start from the top.

So, I had this ritual before mom would wake up. I'd stretch and kick and work on finding my mouth with my thumb. Maybe I'd roll around just for fun.

But once mom gets up, things start moving and sloshing again, and the motion of the waves just puts me right out. I get drowsy and spend a few minutes trying to find my thumb, and once I do, I'm out like a narcoleptic after a cup of Sunday morning Lutheran decaf.

Things were fine and normal, until I woke up because something was squishing me. Have you ever seen that scene in Star Wars? The one



Sadie: Snuggling up to mom after the loss of comfort.

with the trash compactor? Kinda like that, but without the snake-thing. The room was getting smaller, and I was sliding down, well, somewhere. All of a sudden, I got stuck, as something wrapped around my legs. Panicked, I thought, "it's that snake!" I can't reach it because my arms are pinned down by that squeezing. Then these metal things come in and get me untangled, but then some other metal things come and grab me by the head and rip me out into a really bright light.

Dang it's loud out here. Nothing is soothing or relaxing. And it's cold until you're cocooned in a couple of blankets. How do you stand it? I'm louder out here, and screaming and crying is my only means of communication for now. Old ladies insist on holding and touching me. Talk about frustrating. It's all wrong, I tell you. It's wrong to be stolen away from everything that comforts you and dropped into the middle of a loud, cold world.

Like I said. What a day.